



File Code: 6500

Date: September 7, 2001

Subject: Wildland Fire Suppression Costs in Fiscal Year 2001

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director and
Washington Office Staff

I continue to need your help to assure that agency funds are fully available to meet wildland fire suppression costs in fiscal year 2001. First, let me say thank you, for the work all units have done in identifying a significant portion of the estimated funding needs by agreeing to defer projects in the land acquisition and construction accounts.

As I discussed on our August 21 conference call, this fire season is once again stretching our resources to the limit. Current estimates indicate suppression costs of approximately \$699 million. At this level, agency needs will exceed available appropriated fire suppression funds by \$230 million. It is imperative that the agency retain flexibility to cover these costs by avoiding obligations that can potentially be deferred.

The enclosed talking points and briefing paper provides information on the history of funding fire suppression, reasons for our present situation, and the actions we are taking to assure funds are available to cover all fire suppression needs. Until we have satisfied these needs, I need all units to abide by the following direction:

- Defer all land acquisitions and construction contracts that were identified in response to the Washington Office's requests of August 29 and 30.
- Defer all Working Capital Fund and related "project" acquisitions, including fleet, computer, and radios. Expenditures for maintenance may continue.

Work on all of these projects should continue up to the point of obligation. Do not proceed with any further acquisitions or contracts involving the funds noted above until notified by the Washington Office. Such notification will be made through the Office of the Chief Financial Officer through your Region/Station budget contacts. Additionally, I have instructed that land acquisition cases proceed where deferral may result in project failure caused by withdrawal of sellers or cooperators.

Congress has traditionally reappropriated funds borrowed for fire suppression. I am confident that they will do so again. We are also actively working with USDA to develop a long-term solution to paying for fire suppression costs with the objective of avoiding this situation in the future.



I want to close by acknowledging the hard work and demands of this fire season and further recognize the challenges caused by deferring projects, many of which have taken years to bring to finality. I very much appreciate your commitment to meeting our fire suppression responsibilities including the need to assure funds are available to pay for the costs.

/s/ Dale N. Bosworth

DALE N. BOSWORTH

Chief

Enclosures